

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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FM AMEMBASSY SOFIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6504

C O N F I D E N T I A L SOFIA 0562

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, BU, US

SUBJ: POPOV VISIT IN LIGHT OF NSDM 212

POLICY

1. WE HAVE REVIEWED NSDM 212. WHILE WE ACCEPT LOW PRIORITY GIVEN BULGARIA, DEPARTMENT SHOULD BE AWARE THAT PARA 4 OF NSDM RAISES PROBLEM OF HOW WE DEAL WITH QUESTION OF VISIT OF POLIT-BURO MEMBER IVAN POPOV WHOM WE AGREED RECEIVE IN 1973.

2. WE HAVE TOLD GOB THAT POPOV'S VISIT SHOULD BE MORE THAN CEREMONIAL AND EXPRESSED OUR HOPE THAT SUFFICIENT PROGRESS WILL HAVE BEEN MADE IN IMPROVING RELATIONS TO ALLOW CONCLUSION OF CONCRETE AGREEMENTS AT TIME OF HIS VISIT. IN DOING SO, WE HAVE LEFT IMPRESSION THAT POPOV VISIT WOULD INVOLVE IN SOME WAY ECONOMIC- COMMERCIAL UNDERSTANDING, LONG AWAITED BY GOB, AS OBTAINED THIS YEAR BY POPOV'S HUNGARIAN COUNTERPART. THIS IMPRESSION FURTHER STRENGTHENED BY OUR STATEMENTS THAT ECONOMIC QUESTIONS CAN ONLY BE DEALT WITH IN WASHINGTON.

3. IF, AS NSDM STATES, INITIATION OF COMMERCIAL NEGOTIATIONS WITH GOB MUST AWAIT SATISFACTORY CONCLUSION SIMILAR TALKS WITH ROMANIA, HUNGARY AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA, WE VIEW IT AS UNLIKELY THAT TALKS COULD BEGIN BEFORE 1974 AT EARLIEST, I. E. AFTER DATE AGREED UPON BY BOTH GOVERNMENTS FOR POPOV VISIT.

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4. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES WE SEE FOLLOWING ALTERNATIVES:

A. LEVEL WITH GOB AND REAFFIRM WHAT THEY PROBABLY SUSPECT ANYWAY, I. E. THAT BULGARIA IS LAST ON LIST OF US PRIORITIES AND THAT POPOV TRIP MUST BE DELAYED UNTIL SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS MADE ON COMMERCIAL AGREEMENT WITH CZECHS. WHILE THIS COURSE HAS ADVANTAGE OF HONESTY, IT COULD GIVE GOB CAUSE TO CHARGE BAD FAITH AND WOULD PROBABLY REMOVE IMPORTANT INCENTIVE FOR GOB TO MOVE AHEAD NOW ON OTHER ISSUES SUCH AS CONSULAR CONVENTION.

B. STALL ON POPOV VISIT BY THROWING UP SERIES OF PROBLEMS TO GOB IN NON- ECONOMIC AREA AS PREREQUISITE FOR VISIT. STALLING TACTICS, WHILE FEASIBLE IN VIEW OF MANY OUTSTANDING ISSUES IN BILATERAL POLITICAL RELATIONS, PROBABLY COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE SINCE THERE IS A LIMIT EVEN TO BULGARIAN PATIENCE.

5. ACCEPTING THAT WE MUST MOVE AWAY FROM FIRM COMMITMENT TO POPOV VISIT THIS YEAR, WE SHOULD DO SO IN FASHION WHERE DOES NOT EXACERBATE DIFFERENCES NOR CONVERT INTO BITTERNESS PRESENT BULGARIAN INTEREST IN IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH US. IN THIS CONNECTION, THIRD ALTERNATIVE SUGGEST ITSELF. WHILE ON THE HAND CONTINUING TO PRESS FOR RESOLUTION OF QUESTIONS PRESENTED IN EMBASSY' S FEBRUARY AIDE MEMOIRE, WE SHOULD SKETCH OUT FOR GOB BROAD OUTLINE OF ULTIMATE PACKAGE DEAL, INCLUDING ECONOMIC QUESTIONS. WE SHOULD INFORM GOB THAT POPOV VISIT SHOULD AWAIT SOLUTION TO PROBLEMS INCLUDED IN PACKAGE, E. G. CONSULAR CONVENTION, BETTER TONE IN PUBLIC TREATMENT, AS WELL AS BOND SETTLEMENT, COMMERCIAL FACILITIES FOR US BUSINESSMEN, ETC., PROBLEMS WHICH LIKELY TO TAKE MANY MONTHS TO SOLVE. WE WOULD SUGGEST THAT VISIT COULD BE MORE USEFUL WHEN SOLUTION TO THESE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ISSUES HAVE BECOME VISIBLE.

6. WE REALIZE THAT EVEN THIS ACTION RUNS RISK THAT GOB WILL SEE IT AS ANOTHER STALLING ACTION AND INDICATION THAT US NOT REALLY INTERESTED IN REACHING ECONOMIC AGREEMENTS WITH BULGARIA. TO COUNTER THIS AND TO DEMONSTRATE GOOD FAITH, WE BE BELIEVE WE SHOULD REACTIVATE LUKANOV DELEGATION FOR THE ALREADY AGREED PURPOSE OF TRADE PROMOTION. PRESS HAS NOT PLAYED BEIRUT RAID SLANDER SINCE APRIL 29.

7. UNLESS WE ARE ABLE TO GIVE SOME HINT OF THE PACKAGE WE
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WILL ULTIMATELY SETTLE FOR, INCLUDING SOME THINGS WHICH WILL APPEAL TO GOB, I. E. ECONOMIC- COMMERICAL, POSTPONEMENT OF POPOV VISIT COULD MAKE ULTIMATE NEGOTIATIONS MORE DIFFICULT. BULGARIANS ARE QUICK TO LOOK FOR SLURS, AND IN WAKE OF RECENT GO- ROUND ON LUKANOV, SHIFT ON POPOV DATES WITHOUT SUFFICIENT EXPLANATION COULD RAISE SERIOUS QUESTIONS ON US MOTIVE.
HOUSTON

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